

WOULDN'T LITTLE SIX, SEVEN AND EIGHT-YEAR-OLD LIKE TO BE TAUGHT THIS WAY?

By Jane Whitaker.

Little six and seven and eight-year-old, imagine how splendid it would be if, instead of sitting on a hard bench before a desk, with "reading and writing and 'rithmetic" to study, you could play out in the great out-of-doors and still call it school?

It sounds like a dream, doesn't it, and yet, one woman teacher has put such a thought into effect and is having wonderful success with it.

Her name is Mrs. Marietta L. Johnson. She says she has been a teacher "for a hundred years" and she told the Federation of Teachers all about her new system of teaching little six and seven and eight-year-olds, and even tots that are nine and ten and eleven by the out-of-door method.

"Like all teachers, my idea of education was to plan how to force so much knowledge upon the brain of a child in a given number of years," Mrs. Johnson said. "And I believed in that plan as we all do, until one day my principal came to me and handed me a book.

"'Education is all wrong,' he said, 'unless it leads to this.'"

"I was amazed. How could education be all wrong? Hadn't we led it up to what we considered perfection? But that night I read the book. It was called 'Development of the Child,' and I saw then that our system of education was all wrong and resolved that if I ever had a child of my own I would experiment with a new brand of education.

"Education is life. Would life ever make round-shouldered, anaemic, nervous children? Could the teacher ever break down teaching if she is giving life? Education would be life giving to the teachers as well as to the children. A sound, accomplished body, an intelligent mind, a sincere spirit, this is education.

"Our educational system is based on promotion. We say to two little six-year-olds: 'Study this and you

will be promoted.' And one learns rapidly and the other slowly and one is promoted and the other is not. One is considered superior and the other inferior, whereas they are only natural. And thus they experience injustice disguised as justice and their views of justice are early distorted.

"It was some time afterward that I had my own little boy and I put into practice my theory of proper training. I started several children at the same time.

"There were no benches and no desks to sit in front of. There were no studies for the little six, seven and eight-year-old. They had what I called the life class. All that was required of them was just to live. They were not humped up over books, they were free to move around.

"They danced, they played games, they followed their natural inclinations. They had physical development, not routine physical culture, but physical development by sport.

"They were taught to love music, not by studying notes which mean nothing to the child, but by hearing the melodies that children love. They did not learn to read out of a book, but listened as stories were read to them and discussed the stories afterward and retold them.

"They were not permitted to do as they pleased. There was no disobedience; they had certain hours to play and certain others to listen to music and certain others to follow their own inclinations.

"The children of nine, ten and eleven followed the same program, almost, though they were put to read, write and make figures, but there were no home tasks. They opened a book and discussed what was in it and their interest was aroused, they did not hate books.

"These children also learned cooking, sewing and manual training. Both classes had gardens where they spent a little time each day.